SOME NEW BOOKS.

English Towns in the Fifteenth Century.

Mrs. J. R. GREEN, the widow of the well-known historian of the English people, has devoted herself for some years to the fulfilment of a task bequeathed to her by her husband, the study of various problems connected with the mediæval story of the English burghs. The outcome of her researches is now published in two volumes, each comprising more than four hundred large octavo pages, under the collective title of *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century* (Macmillans). The field which the author has undertaken to explore is one which has been comparatively untraversed. No country is so backward as England in respect of municipal history, whether this be considered from the popular or the scientific point of view. In the countries of Continental Europe the importance of the investigation of municipal institutions has been recognized and has employed the erudition and ingenuity of a long succession of scholars. But when foreign students have attempted to draw English towns within the range of their generalizations, they have been confronted with a dearth of relevant and trustworthy materials. To make good this shortcoming, to picture provincial town life as it was in the England of the fifteenth century, Mrs. Green has had to undergo the labor of seeking out a mass of scattered and isolated details in county histories, archæological journals, reports of commissions, imperfect abstracts of town documents, parliamentary records, charters, and stray pamphlets. Under such circumstances she must necessarily, as she is aware, expose herself to correction in minor particulars at the hands of experts possessed of local knowledge. At the same time she is justified in thinking that without an effort such as she has made to obtain a comprehensive view of the whole subject, the student would be left open to the much graver errors arising from the want of some ascertained measure of proportion, and from the incapacity to distinguish in each town that which is normal from that which is individual or strange. The much-debated question of the origin of municipal institutions, and other contentious aspects of the subject, are in the first of these volumes set aside, and the author confines herself to the sudden development of the boroughs in wealth and independence, which was incidental to the remarkable industrial revolution that in the fifteenth century transformed England from a producer of raw products into an exporter of manufactured goods. In the second volume she deals with topics which have long been pivots of controversy, and she is led by her researches to arrive at conclusions contrary to those which are commonly accepted. Such controverted matters we pass over in this notice, and limit ourselves to a very succinct outline of what Mrs. Green has to tell us regarding the striking industrial revolution to which we have referred; concerning the coincident upstarting of the English burghs, and the grade of civilization exemplified in the town life of the eventful period, about which in ordinary histories little is recorded outside of the wars of the Roses—wars in which, as Prof. Thorold Rogers has shown, astonishingly little interest was taken by the mass of their English contemporaries.

I.

Until the middle of the fourteenth century England had been to Europe what Australia is to-day, a country known only as the provider of the raw material of manufactures. From the twelfth century wool had been the one great export of England, and the one great source of wealth for nobles, churchmen, farmers, even kings. If a Parliament like that of 1258 or a great statesman like Simon de Montfort urged that England should herself become an independent and self-supporting centre of manufactures, these seemed as idle words to monopolists dealing in wool with command of the world's markets, who saw no need to forsake their easy path to wealth at a moment when the growth of manufactures in the Netherlands opened a vast outlet for England's staple product. At one time in the reign of Edward III. it is said that 30,000 sacks of wool were shipped from England.

But before the reign of Edward III. had closed the English exporters of wool knew that they had fallen upon evil days. Trade began to slip from their grasp. The revenue they paid from their profits to the King's exchequer fell in the few years from 1391 to 1411 to one-fifth of its former value, and was still calculated at this dismal fifth in 1449. Instead of the 30,000 sacks which they yearly sent forth during one period of the fourteenth century, they could not at the close of the fifteenth century collect more than 8,024 sacks, and in the last year of Henry VIII. even this number had shrunk to under 5,000. Taxes which lay comparatively lightly on the exporters in happier times, fell as an intolerable burden when their warehouses lay empty and their ranks were thinned by bankruptcy and desertion. At the very moment when all rural England was being rapidly turned into a land of sheep pastures for the limitless production of wool, the company of the wool exporters was finally and irrevocably ruined. What had happened was this: The wool was being sold at home, and out of the ruin of the exporters of the staple the cloth makers sucked no small advantage. For it was during the fifteenth century that the great industrial revolution was completed whereby England was turned from a country whose chief business was exporting wool into a country whose chief business was exporting cloth. The people, indeed, had long manufactured rough cloth for common use. But during the reigns of the three Edwards the idea had constantly gained ground that by working up their own raw material Englishmen might retain for themselves the profits which foreigners had previously secured, and native manufacturers were undoubtedly doing a considerable export trade during the latter part of the fourteenth century. Half a century later, in 1411, the very year when the subsidy on wool fell to a fifth, broadcloths are first mentioned in an act of Parliament, and thenceforth they became the chief article of export. As though they had been for a while forgotten by the exchequer, the exporters of cloth found themselves free from all subsidy tax, and only obliged to pay to the indifferent authorities tolls that amounted to less than two per cent. for natives and merchants of the Hanse occupied in the trade, and less than 8 per cent. for aliens. They might well contrast this export tax complacently with the 33 per cent. paid by the so-called merchants of the staple, and the 70 per cent. exacted from all other exporters of wool—a tax so inordinate that it explains why in 1424 Parliament had to forbid the carrying of sheep over sea to shear them there. A farmer who could sell his wool next door to a native manufacturer naturally would not send it over sea with vexatious formalities and under oppressive export dues.

II.

After the beginning of the fifteenth century, by which time the industrial revolution in England was well under way, trade grew apace. Carracks of Genoa carried English cloths to the shores of the Black Sea; galleys of Venice bore them to the vats of the Venetian dyers; English traders travelled with them to the inland markets of Prussia and gave them in exchange for casks of herrings in Denmark; merchants of the Hanseatic league sold them at the fair in Novgorod. At the close of the century the English merchant-adventurers exported about 60,000 pieces of cloth yearly, and in the early part of the sixteenth century the cloth dealers boasted that never before in the memory of man was so much cloth sent out of England. The 60,000 bales rose in 1530 to 84,789 bales, and in 1547 to 122,354; by the last-named date the price obtained from the foreigner had been raised by a fifth. Meanwhile, too, the native manufacturer was laying hold of the home market, as the great religious corporations and landowners, that had once provided on their own estates for all local wants, recognized the new condition of things and, instead of making cloth at home as of old, sent every year far and wide across the country to the great clothing centres to buy material for the household liveries, seeking in one place the coarse, striped cloth of the old pattern, and in another the goods of the new fashion. Fine black copes of worsted were favorite gifts of benefactors to churches, and a patriotic Norfolk gentleman, after seeing a "tippet of fine worsted which is almost like silk," decided to "make his doublet all worsted for worship of Norfolk."

Nor was the growth of English manufacturing enterprise in the fifteenth century confined to the making of cloth. For a couple of hundred years, indeed, the iron trade had made of the Weald the Black Country of those days, and had stirred the Forest of Dean with the din of its seventy-two moveable forges; but now, what with the metals and what with the coal of the country, "the merchants of England maintain that the kingdom is of greater value under the land than it is above." In the reign of Edward IV., when there was a riot among the Mendip miners, and the Lord Chief Justice went down to "set a concord and peace upon the forest of Mendip," it is said that ten thousand people appeared before him at the place of trial. Yet, for all this, the native miners could no longer keep pace with the demands of their own country, now that new industries on all sides required metal that had once gone to supply the wants of the farmer only; and though stores were brought from Sweden and Spain, the price of iron went up to double what it had been before the plague. Even by the end of the fourteenth century shipbuilders were fitting out vessels for foreign as well as English buyers. English gunsmiths began to send out of their workshops brazen guns and bombards superior to anything made in France. These were said, indeed, to have given England its success in the French war under Henry V. A number of towns, big and little, boasted of their bell foundries, as for example London, Salisbury, Norwich, Gloucester, and Bridport. In 1455 the copper workers of Dinant set up their industry in England, stealing away from their home upon the Continent to profit by the cheaper labor and readier sale in the island kingdom. Flemish experts taught to Englishmen the art of brickmaking, and native builders set up throughout the country the first brick houses that had been seen in it since the departure of the Romans. Artificers more ambitious than skilful even tried to establish a native industry of glass painting; as a matter of fact, there is good English fifteenth century glass at Malvern and elsewhere. Instead of fetching from abroad carpets and the tapestries used in churches, Englishmen started manufactories at Ramsay, whence may have come, it is suggested, some of the "counterfeit Arras" which adorned the humbler tradesmen's homes. Frames "ordained and made for the working of silk" were at work; lacemakers and ribbon weavers begged the protection of the Government; and English workers sent into the market large quantities of the linen called Holland, from the country where it was first produced. Naturally, under such conditions, the export of every kind of raw material fell out of fashion. Traders no longer carried over sea undressed skins to be prepared by foreign labor, but had the work done by English artisans at home. Whereas, in fine, at the beginning of the fifteenth century merchants brought beer from Prussia to England, at its close they were carrying beer from London to Flanders. Beer, defined as "a malt liquor flavored with bitter herbs, and distinct from ale," was, it seems, made in England before 1445, though it is commonly ascribed to a much later date.

III.

What with the new inland and outland trade, riches were gathered into the hands of the merchants with bewildering rapidity, and with social and political results that alarmed conservatives. The truth is, that the whole people, from sovereign to peasant, shared in the traders' profits. It is calculated that in the reign of Henry VIII. English exports so far exceeded imports as to bring about £50,000, an enormous sum in those days, annually into the country. The balance of trade had inclined yet more strongly in favor of England under Henry VII. Not only did the last-named King lay up vast treasure, but the goldsmiths' shops in London were reported by a foreign traveller to contain more of the precious metals than all those of Rome, Milan, Florence, and Venice taken together. So far as the middle class is concerned, evidence of accumulating wealth is to be found on every side—we shall refer to this presently—but the masses of the working people also had reason to bless the general prosperity. In the middle of the fifteenth century Chief Justice Fortescue contrasts the state of what we should now call the English proletariat with that of the French commonalty. The latter, he says, "drink water; they eat apples with bread right brown, made of rye. They eat no flesh; but, if it be right seldom, a little lard, or of the entrails and heads of beasts slain for the nobles and merchants of the land. They wear no woollen, but if it be a poor coat, under their outermost garment made of great canvas and called a frock. Their hosen be of light canvas, and pass not their knee, wherefore they be gartered and their thighs bare. Their wives and children go barefoot; they may in no other wise live. Their nature is wasted, and the kind of them brought to nought. They go crooked and be feeble, not able to fight, nor to defend the realm; nor have they weapon nor money to buy them weapon withal. But, blessed be God, this land is ruled under a better law, and, therefore, the people thereof be not in such penury, nor thereby hurt in their persons, but they be wealthy, and have all things necessary to the sustenance of nature." Elsewhere Fortescue notes that "in France the people salt but little meat except their bacon, for they would buy little salt," unless the King's officers went round and forced every household to take a certain measure, such as they thought reasonable. But, he adds, "this rule would be sore abhorred in England, as well by the merchants that be wont to have their freedom in buying and selling of salt as by the people that use much to salt their meats."

Of course such an industrial revolution brought after it a commercial revolution. The whole system of distribution had to be reorganized. If in the reign of Edward III. practically the whole of the foreign commerce of England was carried in foreign vessels, in the reign of Henry VII. the great bulk of the trade had passed into English hands. In the face of the powerful confederations that held the traffic of the northern and southern seas, English merchants laid violent hands on the commerce of the world. By the end of the fifteenth century they had vanquished their rivals in the north, while in the south they had firmly planted themselves in every important trading port along the western coast of Europe, and competed with the Italian republics not only for their own carrying trade but for that of the Netherlands as well. British merchants were to be found in every port from Alexandria to Reykjavik, and wherever they touched they left behind them an organized and firmly established trade. It was, in a word, in the fifteenth century, the history of which in ordinary text books chronicles nothing but a dull succession of civil wars, that the foundations of England's manufacturing and commercial supremacy were quietly but surely laid.

IV.

Let us now look somewhat in detail at the proofs of the astonishing progress made by English towns in the fifteenth century by reason of the industrial revolution. Mrs. Green's researches lead her to the belief that the biggest boroughs in 1300 could probably show no more than four or five thousand inhabitants, and of enfranchised burgesses a yet smaller number. The mud or wood-framed huts with gabled roofs of thatch and reeds that lined the narrow lanes sheltered a townsfolk who, accepting a common poverty, traded in little more than the mere necessaries of life. It was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the English towns, as they entered on a larger industrial activity, freed themselves from the indescribable squalor and misery of the early middle ages; but from this time forward may be detected signs of awakening prosperity, at first under the guise of a frugal well-being, but later displaying its luxury with joyous ostentation. In the course of the next hundred years we see trading ports such as Lynn, Sandwich, Southampton and Bristol, and centres of inland traffic such as Nottingham, Leicester and Reading, and manufacturing towns like Norwich, Worcester and York heaping up wealth, doubling and trebling their yearly expenditure, raising the salaries of municipal officers, building new quarters or suburbs, lavishing money on the buying of new privileges for their citizens or on the extension of their trade. While the bigger boroughs were thus enjoying a harvest of fat things, the small seaports and market towns also gathered their share of the general good fortune. Mrs. Green cites, for instance, the town of Colchester, where, from the time of the Norman conquest, about 2,200 persons had managed to live, but in two and a half centuries had never added to their numbers. Of their manner of life something can be gleaned from the record of a toll levied on their goods about 1300. One of the wealthiest tradesmen in the town was a butcher whose valuation was under $40; while the stock in hand of his brethren in the trade consisted mostly of brawn, lard, and a few salting tubs, though one had two carcasses of oxen at 50 cents each, and another had meat worth $7.50 in his shop. If we add to the butchers thirteen tanners and fourteen mercers, who sold gloves, belts, leather, silk purses, and needle cases, besides cloth and flannel, and one even girdles (which with their silver ornaments were costly articles) we have exhausted the list of the well-to-do Colchester burghers. In the course of the fourteenth century, however, makers of cloth came to settle by the side of the tanners and butchers. Card makers, combers, clothiers, weavers, fullers, and dyers flocked to the town and spread their trade out into the neighboring villages. Wool mongers kept on pushing their business, till, in 1373, the bailiffs made the under croft beneath the old moot hall into a wool hall for the convenience of dealers, and added a fine porch with a vault overhanging the entrance to the moot hall, and some shops with chambers over them. Before the fourteenth century had closed the population of Colchester had doubled; the poor houses that once lined the streets were swept away, and rich men erected shops in the new style with sleeping rooms over them fronting the street, and let these dwellings to shop-keeping tenants.

Of the little trading town of Bridport we hear a similar story. In 1319 the richest man had one cow, two hogs, two brass platters, a few hides, and a little furniture—the whole worth $22. One of the most respectable innkeepers in the place owned two hogs, two beds, two tablecloths, two hand napkins, a horse, a brass pot, a platter, a few wooden vessels and some malt. A century later we find a new town. Traders from Bristol, together with men from Holland and other foreign merchants and craftsmen, had settled in its streets, and the townsfolk had grown prosperous and begun to bind themselves in fraternities. The toll hall was repaired, the houses in the town were set in order, and a new causeway was made. The guild hall got a clock, the church was rebuilt and fitted up with organs, and sittings in it were let out to the rich burghers. Even towns which, like Rye, had known all the calamities of war, had only to wait for an interval of peace to profit by the common prosperity. Burned by the French in 1377, burned and laid desolate again in 1448, Rye long remained on the level of poverty which had been general in the early middle ages. In 1414 it sheltered a mere handful of struggling denizens and had but three men who were assessed as owning property amounting to $1.75. By the end of the fifteenth century, however, Rye fishermen were known on distant seas and Rye traders in the fairs at home and abroad. London merchants bought property in the thriving town, and new quarters sprang up with names borrowed from the capital. In 1493 two of the burghers were assessed at $2,000 each, and the total value of the personal property possessed by the inhabitants at $31,500.

In short, the labor and enterprise which in previous centuries had been employed in covering England with castles and cathedrals and monasteries was now absorbed in the work of covering it with new towns. In Canterbury and Worcester and Nottingham and Bristol, and a host of other towns, we may still admire the new houses that were raised for the traders, with their picturesque outlines and fine carved work. Waste places in the boroughs were built over and formed into new wards. On every hand corporations, prompted by municipal pride, erected common halls, set up stately crosses in the market places, such as may still be seen at Winchester and Marlborough; paved the streets, or provided a new water supply for the growing population. Mrs. Green assures us that, were we to count up the new gates and quays and bridges and wharves and harbors and sluices and aqueducts and markets, we should be filled with amazement at a creative activity which was really stupendous. Public duty and private enterprise went hand in hand. Sometimes the whole commonalty was called out to help at a church building, or the digging of a new harbor; sometimes the charity once given to religious uses was turned into the channel of civic patriotism, and good citizens left money to found hospitals and almshouses and schools, to pave the streets, to pay the tolls of their town, to fee lawyers to defend its privileges, or to buy a charter to defend its rights from invasion. Thus it was two traders of Canterbury who built in 1400 the first private bridge over the river; and in 1485 a mercer from London constructed at his own expense the first main drain under the Old Street of Canterbury to carry off the rain water into the river. In Birmingham the whole community formed itself into a "guild and lasting brotherhood" for the doing of works of charity, and chiefly, it seems for the repairing of two great stone bridges and "divers foul and dangerous ways" on the high road to Wales—a work which the municipal corporation was too poor to undertake.

V.

Nor was the growth in wealth the only, or, indeed, the most striking part of the history of English towns during the three centuries from the time of Henry II. to Henry VII. It was not enough that the burghers should create societies of freemen—gentlemen, as Piers Ploughman would have called them—to whom the great antithesis that distinguished man from man was not wealth or poverty, labor or ease, but freedom or bondage. This was the easier part of their task, and was practically finished early in their history. It was a longer and more difficult business to discover how the art of government should be actually practised in municipal communities, and to define the principles of their political existence. In these matters, also, the burghers of the fifteenth century became the pioneers of English liberties, and their political methods have been handed down as part of the heritage of a whole people. As by degrees the multitude of privileges promised and confirmed left the important towns with no more demands to make, they turned their energies to the work of framing the elaborate and highly artificial constitutions which mark the highest point to which their proud and self-sufficient independence had attained. Meanwhile, too, by a happy coincidence, the boroughs were called to take part in the great movement by which the House of Commons was evolved, at a time when the discipline and experience of local self-government had prepared them to exercise a very real influence in the moulding of the English Constitution into its present form. Having for the most part secured their fundamental liberties just before Simon de Montfort, in 1265, summoned the middle class to take their share in the work of Parliament, and having steadily strengthened their position during the years of changing counsels and tentative experiments which followed, they saw the representation of the boroughs definitely established in 1295, the very year after county representation had been irrevocably acknowledged. If for a time the burghers played apparently a small part in political battles, if the separate action of the borough members is scarcely mentioned, the fact remains that throughout the century (the fourteenth), during which the House of Commons was being fashioned, members sent from these free, self-governing communities formed almost two-thirds of that assembly. Edward I. sent parliamentary writs to 166 towns, and in the Parliament of 1300 no fewer than 176 representatives of boroughs sat with the 74 knights of the shire. Silent and acquiescent as they were for a while, there are significant incidents to show the steady growth of their importance and the extent to which statesmen had begun to appreciate the new force with which governments had henceforth to reckon. By the close of the fourteenth century their influence was marked, and it was doubtless through its vigorous burghers that the House of Commons in the early part of the fifteenth century laid hold of powers which it had never had before, and was not to have again for some two hundred years. Then were made the precedents which Pym and Hampden were to turn to such account. In the list of petitions and statutes throughout the fifteenth century in which the influence of the burghers on legislation was plainly dominant, we may look for the true beginning of democratic government in England.

VI.

We come, lastly, to the spirit by which in the fifteenth century the English towns had come to be animated and to the inherent resources of their corporate life. In the town had grown up a new world with an organization and a polity of its own wholly different from that of the country. Members who joined its community were compelled to renounce all other allegiance and forego any protection from other patrons. The chief magistrate set over the inhabitants must be one of their own fellow citizens, not a "far dweller," unless in time of special need, and then only "by the pleasure of the commonalty." It was only when a country squire was willing to throw in his lot with the burghers, to turn into a good citizen and honest tradesman, and prove his trustworthiness and capacity by serving in a subordinate post that he could hope to rise to the highest office. It is true that country folk were welcome to pay a double price for having a stall in the market or a storeroom in the common house for their wool, while the impoverished knight might come in search of a renewal of his wasted fortunes through the dowry of some rich mercer's daughter. Otherwise the town carried on its existence apart in a watchful and jealous independence.

The way of thinking and acting in the new world of traders and shopkeepers and artisans lives again for us in a wholly new literature, which first sprang up in England about the middle of the fifteenth century in books of courtesy and popular rhymes as to the conduct of daily life. The appearance of such books at this time is significant. The nobles had already their own literary traditions handed down from an older time, but the standard of chivalrous conduct set up for them in the Morte d'Arthur was one with which the burghers had nothing to do. The new literature was for the townsfolk themselves, and it bore in every line the impress of its origin. One book of courtesy after another was adapted for the vulgar use. The right conduct of life, especially as it concerned polite behavior, was set out in little songs "made for children young, at the school that bide not long." Plain directions in verse pointed out the duties of girls, of young men, of housewives, of wandering youths looking for service. The rhymes are of the homeliest kind, with trite and prosaic illustrations taken from the common sights of the market place, the tavern, the workshop, or the street with its vagrant pigs and its swinging signs; it is in their rudeness and simplicity that their interest lies. The limits of a burgher's ambition and of his duty are bounded by rigid lines; the standard of conduct is one framed for a laborious middle class, with its plain-spoken seriousness, its sturdy morality, its activity and rectitude and independence, its dulness and vigilance and thrift. According to the songs and sayings it is the duty of good men to set their people well to work, to keep house carefully, to get through any heavy job steadily and swiftly, to pay wages regularly, to give true weight, and to remember that "borrowed thing must needs go home." They are not to ape their betters in dress; with one whom "thou knowest of greater state" there should be no easy fellowship, no dining, or betting, or playing at dice; above all, there must be no show of overmuch "meekness" or servility, "for else a fool thou wilt be told." A practical religion adds its simple obligations. Men ought to pay their tithes, to give to the poor, to be strong and stiff against the devil. Side by side, however, with directions about mercy, truth, and fulfilling the law, come warnings about carving meat and cutting bread and dividing cheese, about a formal and dignified bearing, how to walk and stand and kneel, how to enter a house, and greet a friend in the street—all carefully and laboriously shaped into rhyme. The notion of the worth of the individual man was none the less important for the homely and practical form given to it in rude and untrained expression. Men need not, they are told, be shamefaced, of however lowly position they might come, but in whatever society he might find himself the humblest citizen should so order his behavior that when he left the table, the others should say "A gentleman was here." Evidently these books of courtesy show us one side of the great change that passed over English society when the medieval theory of status was broken down by the increase of riches which trade brought with it, and the new chances of rising in the world through wealth. Men were no longer obliged, as formerly, to pass through the door of the church to find the way to social advancement, but might attain to it along the common highroad of secular enterprise.

It was largely due, too, to the awakened activity of the towns that the work of education went on throughout the fifteenth century, a work whose magnitude and importance have been too long obscured by the reorganizers of the Reformation days, who for the giving of a new charter, or the adapting of a school to the new system established by law, clothed themselves with the glory of founders and bore away from their silent predecessors the honor of inaugurating a new world. As a matter of fact, the founding of free grammar schools all over England was the work of the trading classes themselves in the period preceding the Reformation. Sometimes the schools were founded by guilds; sometimes townsmen who had thriven in the world remembered gratefully the place of their birth or their education. Not only in the busy centres of commerce, but in the obscure villages that lay hidden in forest or waste or on the slopes of northern moors, the children of the later middle ages were gathered into schools. Apparently reading and writing were everywhere common among the town people. No doubt the trader's view of education, enforced after he had taken to a large extent the work of instruction away from the clergy, had a touch of unashamed vulgarity. "To my mind," says the Capper in the Commonweal, "it made no matter if there were no learned men at all" for "the devil a whit good do ye with your studies but set men together by the ears." What men wanted was "to write and read and learn the languages used in the countries about us that we might write our minds to them and they to us." But whatever were their faults, it was in the town schools as much as in the shops or in the council chamber that the religious revolution of the sixteenth century was being prepared; and the wide-reaching results of the spread of education were to be potent factors in the development of the later England. "The fault is in yourselves, ye noblemen's sons," Ascham was to write half a century later, "and, therefore, ye deserve the greater blame, that commonly the meaner men's children come to be the wisest counsellors and greatest doers in the weighty affairs of this realm." M. W. H.

Wolfe Tone.

A new edition of *The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone* has been prepared by Mr. R. BARRY O'BRIEN and published in two thick volumes by T. Fisher Unwin (London). This is the book of which Thomas Moore said that there are few works more interesting, whether for the matter or the manner, the character of the writer himself presenting a most truly Irish mixture of daring in design and lightheartedness in execution; the result being that the sense of awe, with which it is impossible not to contemplate a mission pregnant with tremendous possibilities, is continually relieved with flashes of humor and sentiment.

The life of Theobald Wolfe Tone, edited by his son, was first published in Washington in 1826. The volumes now before us reproduce that work with the exception of the political writings and the account of the subject's family after his death. Mr. O'Brien has added an introduction and such explanatory notes as have been rendered needful by the lapse of time. The work is embellished by six engravings from original portraits.

I.

Thirty-five years spanned Wolfe Tone's life, for he was born in Dublin on June 20, 1763, and he died in the prison of the same city from a self-inflicted wound on Nov. 19, 1798. His grandfather was a respectable farmer in the county of Kildare, who left his property, which consisted of freehold leases, to his eldest son, Wolfe's father, then a successful coach maker. Wolfe himself was the eldest son of his parents, who took great pains with his education, sending him, much against his will, for he wanted to enter the army, to a Latin school and subsequently to Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered as a pensioner in 1781. Although during his undergraduate career he led a wild and roystering life, figuring as a second in a fatal duel, and eloping with the lady whom he married, the granddaughter of a rich clergyman, he nevertheless managed to obtain a scholarship, three premiums, and three medals from the Historical Society. In 1786 he took his degree of B. A., resigned his scholarship, and left the university. About a year later he went to London, ostensibly to read law, his wife and infant daughter remaining at his father's house. He was entered on the books of the Middle Temple, but he tells us that after the first month he never opened a law book and was never in Westminster Hall three times in his life. He seems to have subsisted partly on the proceeds of ill-paid contributions to a magazine, partly on stunted and fitful remittances from his father, who was now himself in great straits, and partly on money borrowed from friends whom Tone had all his life an astonishing faculty for making. Having been two years at the Temple and kept eight terms, that is to say, having dined three days in each term in the common hall, he returned to Dublin and was called to the bar in due form in 1789. He went the circuit but three times, and soon, as he tells us, got sick and weary of the law, and drifted into politics, which, as events were to prove, was undoubtedly his natural vocation.

II.

To appreciate the work done by Tone, one must recall the situation in Ireland when he appeared in the political arena. The repeal of Poyning's act had made the Dublin Parliament an independent legislature, but the Irish Executive was not responsible to it, being appointed by the British ministry. Then again, the Catholics were disfranchised, although they were estimated to number 3,000,000 against 900,000 Dissenters and two or three hundred thousand adherents of the Anglican Church. The provisions of the penal code then in force against the Catholics may be briefly summed up as follows: Catholics were excluded not only from serving in Parliament or voting at Parliamentary elections, but from the magistracy, the municipal corporations, from Trinity College, at that time the only Irish university; from the bench and bar, from the right of voting at vestries, of becoming solicitors, of acting as sheriffs, constables, or jurymen; of serving in the army and navy, or even of holding the post of gamekeeper or watchman. They were prohibited from becoming schoolmasters, ushers, or private tutors, or from sending their children to receive abroad the education withheld from them at home. Catholics could not buy land or inherit it from Protestants, or receive it from them as a gift; or hold leases for more than thirty-one years, or any lease on such terms that the profits of the land exceeded one-third of the rent. Except in the linen trade a Catholic could have no more than two apprentices. He could not have a horse of the value of more than $25, and any Protestant, on giving him $25, might take his horse. He was compelled to pay double to the militia, and in case of war with a Catholic power he was obliged to reimburse the damage done by the enemy's privateers. To convert a Protestant to Catholicism was a capital offence. No Catholic might marry a Protestant, and if his child, however young, professed itself a Protestant it was taken from its father's care, and the Chancellor could assign to it a portion of its father's property. The land of a Catholic landowner was divided equally among his children, unless the eldest son became a Protestant, in which case the parent became simply a land tenant. Lastly, no Catholic could be guardian either to his own children or to those of another. This horrible system, whose enforcement had been pursued for upward of a century with unrelenting acrimony, had reduced the great body of the Catholic peasantry to a condition, moral and physical, scarcely above that of the beasts of the field, and had broken the spirit and degraded the minds of the few remaining Catholic gentry; only in the class of Catholic merchants and traders, and a few members of the medical faculty who had obtained an education in spite of the penal code, did anything like an aspiration to political activity exist. It was not the Catholics, but the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland who composed the flower of the famous volunteer army of 1782 which extorted legislative independence from England and virtually compelled the concession of independence to the American colonies.

Parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation were the questions of the hour when Wolfe Tone, who of course was a Protestant, and, we may add, brought up in the Anglican Established Church, entered politics in 1790-91.

The Catholic organization had recently emerged from the domination of nobles and priests, and fallen under the influence of a great democratic leader, John Keogh; and a secret political society, pledged to reform, had been established among the Dissenters in Belfast. Tone flung himself into the Catholic cause, and, to serve it effectually, joined the Ulster reformers. Visiting Belfast in 1791, he met the members of the secret political society, and coöperated with them in starting the United Irish movement. This movement was in the beginning constitutional; the majority of its promoters were parliamentary reformers. Tone, however, was first and last a rebel; he has himself placed the fact beyond controversy. "To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government," he says, "to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country—these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of our past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the domination of Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter—these were my means." Tone succeeded in his earnest effort to bring the United Irishmen and the Catholic Committee into touch. In 1792 the Catholic leaders visited Belfast, and then and there was sealed the bond of union between them and their Ulster brethren. In the same year Tone, while remaining a Protestant, became Assistant Secretary to the Catholic Committee. Thanks to him Catholics and United Irishmen now worked together for a common cause, Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform constituting the programme of both. The Catholics were organized as they had never been before; agents of the committee were sent throughout the country; communications were opened between Dublin and the provinces. There was a consolidation of forces and a concentration of aims which made the agitation formidable. "I have made men of the Catholics," said Keogh, and it was no idle boast. He had infused a spirit of independence into the Catholic body which gave life and energy to the Catholic movement; the country was aroused; the Ministry were alarmed; the union between northern Presbyterians and southern Catholics sent a thrill through the Cabinet.

III.

Meanwhile, troubles on the Continent increased. England's allies were routed by the soldiers of uprisen France. The principles of the French revolution spread to Ulster. Protestant volunteers marched through the Protestant capital, cheering for the French republic and bidding defiance to England. In honor of the victory at Valmy, Belfast and Dublin were illuminated. On this occasion Tone writes in his diary: "Brunswick and his army are running out of France with Dumouriez pursuing him. If the French had been beaten it was all over with us." The British Government felt that the United Irishmen and the Catholics were driving in the direction of separation. Could they be stopped by a policy of conciliation which would break up the union of their forces, satisfying some and isolating the others? Pitt thought they could, and, acting upon the conviction, resolved to grant the most urgent demands of the Catholics. Accordingly, in 1793, they were admitted to the parliamentary franchise. Tone urged the Catholic Committee to insist upon complete emancipation, making their coreligionists not only electors, but eligible to seats in the Dublin House of Commons, as well as to other privileges. But Keogh refused to move from the line of battle originally drawn up; the franchise being within his reach, he resolved to take it and bide his time for the rest. "Will the Catholics be satisfied with the franchise?" says Tone; and he adds: "I believe they will, and be damned." He was disgusted with Keogh's moderation. "I see," he notes, "that merchants make bad revolutionists." For his own part he was not in the least conciliated. His goal being separation, he was not to be satisfied with any minor concession. In 1794 he plunged more deeply into treason, as an unsuccessful attempt at revolution is called, and others followed or anticipated his example. Measures were taken for reorganizing the United Irish Society on a rebellious basis, but these were checked by the arrival of Lord Fitzwilliam with a promise to emancipate the Catholics. It is well known that George III. would not allow him to fulfil this promise; the policy of concession was abandoned, and an era of terror and rebellion began. On March 25, 1795, Fitzwilliam left Ireland, and on May 10 of the same year the United Irish Society became a distinctly rebellious organization. Soon afterward Tone, who was under the surveillance of the authorities, resolved to leave for America; before departing he explained his plans to the United Irish leaders and to the Catholic leader, John Keogh. "I told them," he says, "that it was my intention immediately on my arrival in Philadelphia to wait on the French Minister, to detail to him fully the situation of affairs in Ireland, and to endeavor to obtain a recommendation to the French Government; if I succeeded so far, I would leave my family in America and set off instantly for Paris, where, in the name of my country, I would apply for the assistance of France to enable us to assert our independence."

IV.

This plan was promptly and successfully carried out. On June 13, 1795, Tone sailed from Belfast for America, and, after a short stay in the United States arrived at Havre in January, 1796, forthwith placed himself in communication with the French Government, established close relations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with Carnot, then a member of the Directory and the "organizer of victory," with Gen. Clarke and Hoche, and finally persuaded the Directors to send a strong expedition to Ireland. On Dec. 16, 1796, a French fleet of forty-three sail, carrying an army of 15,000 men under the command of Hoche and Grouchy, left Brest. Tone, who now held the rank of Adjutant-General in the French service, was on the Indomptable. In the night the ships were scattered, and the Fraternité, with Hoche on board, never reached Ireland. But Grouchy, with thirty-five sail, including the Indomptable, made Bantry Bay on Dec. 21. Tone urged him to land, but he hesitated, standing off and on the coast until the elements warred for England and swept the French fleet from the Irish shore. "It is sad," writes Tone "after having forced my way thus far, to be obliged to turn back, but it is my fate, and I must submit." Nevertheless, elastic under misfortune, he did not relax his efforts. He urged the French Government to despatch another expedition, and in his appeal he was supported by delegates from Ireland and backed by the influence of Hoche. Another expedition was, in fact, prepared by the Dutch republic in union with France; but on Oct. 17, 1797, the Dutch fleet, under De Winter, was destroyed at Camperdown by the English fleet under Duncan. A month before the battle Hoche, in whom Tone had kindled a real interest for Ireland, died. Even now Tone did not despair, but applied himself with fresh vigor to persuade the French Government to make one more attempt in the cause of Irish freedom. Yielding at last to his importunities, and apprised of the insurrection which had broken out in several parts of Ireland, between May and July, 1798, the Directory consented to make another effort. The plan now was to send detachments from various French ports, in pursuance, or rather in anticipation, of which purpose Gen. Humbert left Rochelle with a small force toward the middle of August, accompanied by Tone's brother Matthew and another United States exile, Bartholomew Teeling. Humbert landed in Killala on the 22d and beat the English General Lake so thoroughly that to this day the battle is known as the "Races of Castlebar." The Viceroy Cornwallis, however, came quickly to Lake's help and forced Humbert to surrender on Sept. 8. Matthew Tone and Teeling were arrested, conveyed to Dublin, and hanged.

But Wolfe Tone was still alive, and therefore a final experiment was yet to be made. On Sept. 20, 1798, the last French expedition set sail from Brest. It consisted of one ship of the line, the Hoche, of eight frigates, and of one schooner, the Biche. Tone was on board the Hoche with Admiral Bompard. As in 1796, the ships were scattered, but on Oct. 10 Bompard arrived at the entrance of Lough Swilly with the Hoche, two frigates, and the Biche. At daybreak next morning a British squadron, comprising six sail of the line, one razee (sixty guns), and two frigates, hove in sight. Bompard signalled the French frigates and the schooner to retreat, and cleared the Hoche for action. A boat from the schooner came alongside for final orders; the French officers gathered around Tone and urged him to escape. "The contest is hopeless," they said. "We shall be prisoners of war, but what will become of you?" He answered, "Shall it be said that I fled when the French were fighting the battles of my country? No; I shall stand by the ship." The French ship was surrounded, but Bompard nailed his colors to the mast, and for six hours the Hoche stood the combined fire of her British opponents. Tone commanded a battery and fought like a lion, exposing himself to every peril. At length, with yawning ribs, with five feet of water in her hold, her rudder carried away, her sails and cordage hanging in shreds, her batteries dismounted and every gun silenced, the Hoche struck. She was towed into Lough Swilly, and the prisoners were landed and marched to Letterkenny. The Earl of Cavan invited the French officers to breakfast. Tone was among the guests. An old college companion, Sir George Hill, recognized him. "How do you do, Mr. Tone?" said Sir George; "I am very happy to see you." Tone greeted Hill cordially and said: "How are you, Sir George? How are Lady Hill and your family?" The police, who suspected that Tone was among the prisoners, lay in waiting in an adjoining room. Hill went to them, pointed to Tone, and said: "There is your man!" Tone was called from the table; he knew that his hour was come, but he went cheerfully to his doom. Hurried to Dublin, he was put on his trial before a court martial on Nov. 10, and ordered to be hanged within forty-eight hours. On the evening of Nov. 11, while the soldiers were erecting the gallows before his window, he cut his throat with a penknife, inflicting a deep wound. A surgeon closed the wound and said that he possibly might recover. "I am sorry," said Tone, "that I have been so bad an anatomist." He lingered until Nov. 19. Standing by his bedside, the surgeon whispered to an attendant that if he attempted to move or speak he would die instantly. Tone overheard him, and making a slight movement, said: "I can yet find words to thank you, sir; it is the most welcome news you can give me. What should I wish to live for?" Falling back with these expressions on his lips, Wolfe Tone expired. So ended the rebellion of 1798.

V.

Mr. O'Brien says truly that Tone needs to be defended against himself. In his diary he carries frankness to an extravagant pitch, not only confessing but exaggerating his faults. He acknowledges that he sometimes swore frightfully and went to bed drunk. Swearing and drinking were vices of his time. English statesmen were not free from them, but who would think of belittling William Pitt because, according to tradition, he seldom went to bed sober, and once reeled before the Speaker's eye? Why should we not, asks Mr. O'Brien, accept in the case of Tone the judgment of such Englishmen as the Duke of Wellington, Froude, and Goldwin Smith? Wellington said: "Wolfe Tone was a most extraordinary man, and his autobiography is the most curious history of those times. With a hundred guineas in his pocket, unknown and unrecommended, he went to Paris in order to overturn the British Government in Ireland. He asked for a large force; Lord Edward Fitzgerald for a small one. They listened to Tone"; and the result was the Bantry Bay expedition, for the failure of which Tone was not responsible. Who was responsible Froude has told us. "Then, as twenty years later, on another occasion no less critical, Grouchy was the good genius of the British empire." His incapacity to grasp a great opportunity lost Ireland, as it lost Waterloo. Recalling these events, Mr. Goldwin Smith has said of Tone: "Though his name is little known among Englishmen, he, brave, adventurous, sanguine, fertile in resources, buoyant under misfortune, was near being as fatal an enemy to England as Hannibal was to Rome."

ODD FACTS FROM FOREIGN LANDS.

Lived a Century in One Place.

From the London Daily Telegraph.

Mrs. Ann Wheeler, widow of a laborer, died at Ashmore, Salisbury, on Saturday, aged 102, as certified by the baptismal register of that parish, where she was born and had lived all her long life.

Cost of Public Education in England.

From the London Pall Mall Gazette.

A Parliamentary return of the Education Department states that the expenditure for public education in England and Wales in 1893 was £6,894,152, an increase over the previous year of £428,636. The total number of schools on the annual grant list on Aug. 31, 1893, was 19,682, with an average attendance of 4,120,457 scholars.

Iceland Has the Grip Bad.

From the London St. James's Gazette.

According to the latest advices received from Iceland a violent epidemic of influenza is raging at Reykjavik. No papers have been published for a week, and about 90 per cent. of the inhabitants are said to be suffering from the complaint. The High School has been forced to close, all the masters, with one exception, and almost all the pupils being attacked.

Women Voters After the Offices Now.

From the London Daily News.

WELLINGTON, April 13.—A deputation of women waited to-day upon the Hon. R. J. Seddon, the Premier, at Gisborne, to urge upon him the right of women to be eligible as members of Parliament. The Premier, in reply, said that the request was the logical outcome of the recent extension of the Parliamentary suffrage to women, but observed that their political education was necessary first.

Smart Liverpool Postmen.

From the Cardiff Western Mail.

The other day a letter thus addressed was received at the Liverpool Central Post Office: "Al Reverendissimo Signor Parrocco della Chiesa di Oilcros, Grinscoltrid, Liverpool, Inghilterra." Who but an expert could have translated "Oilcros" into "Holy Cross" and "Grinscortrid" into "Great Crosshall street"? The letter, with the envelope marked in red ink "Try Holy Cross, Great Crosshall street," was delivered on the day it reached the city.

England's Big Auxiliary Navy.

From the London Standard.

The Admiralty have arranged with the Cunard, Peninsular and Oriental, and Canadian Pacific Steamship companies for those companies to hold twenty-eight of their steamships at the disposition of the Admiralty in case of emergency. Nearly £54,000 will be paid in subsidies this year for twelve of these steamships. For the remaining sixteen ships no subsidies will be paid. Last year nine vessels only were held at the disposition of the Admiralty, and for five of these £31,073 was paid in subsidies.

Human Habitations Despoiled to Make Haunts for Wild Birds and Beasts.

Letter in the London Spectator.

It was very interesting to read in the *Spectator* of April 7 that, owing to the extension of deer forests in Scotland, golden eagles and wildcats are on the increase, and are now safe from extirpation there. But there is also a suggestive *per contra*, which, likewise, is not unconnected with the extension of deer forests—the removal of the cottager from the land, the divorce of Scots from Scotland. About ten years ago there were ninety thousand vagrants in Scotland; there are now about one hundred and fifty thousand, to a population of under five millions. Germany has about the same number of vagrants to a population of fifty millions. It would be matter for regret if golden eagles became extinct in Scotland. But it is matter for sadness that they are flying over the comparatively recent homes of now homeless sons of the land.

To Cross the Ocean in a Cockleshell.

From the London Daily Telegraph.

A novel experiment in ocean navigation is to be attempted by a Nottingham enthusiast, who has been occupying himself for a year past with the construction of a boat in which he proposes to cross the Atlantic during the forthcoming summer. The vessel, which is built of iron, and is entirely of his own design and make, is only 10 feet 6 inches long, with 3 feet beam and 2 feet 6 inches depth, and is thus the smallest craft that has ever attempted such an adventurous voyage. It is what is known as a "whaleback" deck, and the cabin, lighted by glass windows at the side, will be completely watertight when closed, fresh air being obtained by pipes. Should the tiny craft be overturned, the inventor claims that it will automatically right itself. She will be fitted with a ten foot mast from the fore deck with jib and mainsail, and additional motive power will be supplied by a geared handscrew. The navigator intends to start from Nottingham, sailing down the Trent to Hull, and making for the Atlantic by way of the English Channel. He expects that the trip will occupy him something over a month.

A Queer String of Accidents.

From the London Daily Telegraph.

PARIS, April 8.—At the corner of the Rue de Sèze and the Rue Basse du Rempart yesterday afternoon a private carriage, an ordinary Parisian fiacre and a washerwoman's wagon barred the way. The drivers of these vehicles were indulging in the Parisian form of Billingsgate, when the horses became very restive, and the one attached to the fiacre dashed away and started toward the Opera. The wheels struck the pavement, the driver was thrown out and crushed under the wheels. A little further on a man who chanced to be passing was run into and badly hurt. Meanwhile, a young servant girl, who was leaning out of a fifth-story window to see what was going on below, suddenly fell forward, the window bar having broken, and was instantly killed on the pavement. The horse was still running madly on. Two policemen rushed forward to stop him. One of them fell kicked by the horse; the other was knocked down by the carriage. Turning suddenly into the Rue Caumartin, the animal dashed up against one of the great wagons of the Bon Marché, and in the collision tore off a wheel of the fiacre. A little further on he upset another large goods wagon, and immediately after broke the shafts and lantern of another fiacre. The horse was finally stopped by two men.